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HOUSTON, TEXAS

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# THE FLY LEAF

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First Fall Meeting of the Friends:  
Early Maps of Texas

The first fall meeting of the Friends of the Fondren Library will be held on Monday, October 23, at 8 p.m. in the Lecture Lounge of the Library. An exhibit of early maps of Texas, loaned by Dr. Henry Maresh of Houston, President of the Harris County Historical Society, will be mounted in the Exhibition Lobby as a special preview for the meeting.

These maps, dating from 1579 to 1864, all include the area now known as Texas, some extending from the West Indies to Canada, and one showing also the "Island of California". For their errors as well as their accuracy the maps are a valuable and delightful study to anyone interested in the history of this region.

Mr. William Masterson, who has aided the Library staff in cataloging the maps,

will analyze them at the meeting. Anyone outside the Friends group who is particularly interested in maps or Texas history is cordially welcome.

### What Makes a Rare Book Rare?

Miss Fannie Ratchford, Librarian of the rare book collections at the University of Texas, was guest speaker at the opening formal meeting of the Friends last June. In describing the development of the rare book collections at the University and many personal anecdotes from her years as librarian there, Miss Ratchford pointed out that a rare book is simply one which is needed and difficult to procure. Its price depends not on the intrinsic value of the book, but on the current market: how many people want that book and what they are willing to pay. Rare books may sometimes be bought for ten dollars, but first they must be located. Miss Ratchford extended a kind invitation to the Friends to meet at

Austin in the near future. We accepted.

Other lectures and special exhibits are being arranged by the Steering Committee with the aid of the Librarian for the winter and spring.

First Gift to the Library through the Friends

The first gift to the Library through the Friends is a collection of thirty recent French scientific publications. It was made by M. Henri Jean Job, Consul General of France, on behalf of the French government. The Flyleaf hopes this may be the first of many bequests which it will be proud and happy to announce in the future.

I Should Like to Become a Member

Anyone interested in the purpose of the Friends to extend the usefulness of the Fondren Library is invited to become a member. Annual membership dues of two dollars are requested to help maintain the society. Larger donations will be gratefully

received. The Librarian and the Library Committee will direct all purchases of books or other research material from the general funds of the society. With the adoption of a constitution at the coming meeting a formal schedule of subscriptions will be set up. Donations to the Friends are tax exempt.

From the Chairman: Are You with Us?

The Friends of the Fondren Library is a medium of expression for people who enjoy good books. We believe that a love of books can be developed by meeting together and centering our interest in books around the Fondren Library. The Friends group is not primarily a fund-raising organization, nor necessarily an alumni activity. We think we can lend a helping hand to the Librarian. Those who feel that a great library can assist a greater Rice Institute develop intellectual leadership in the community can find a home in the Friends of the Fondren Library.

James L. Whitcomb



## Desiderata

This section may put us in mind of some well known verses by Oliver Wendell Holmes entitled "Contentment", and beginning, "Little I ask, my wants are few". The poet is speaking ironically, and goes on to request a brownstone mansion on Beacon Street, and more to the point for us, when it comes to his library:

Of books but few,-- some fifty score  
 For daily use, and bound for wear;  
 The rest upon an upper floor;--  
 Some little luxury there  
 Of red morocco's gilded gleam,  
 And vellum rich as country cream.

For "fifty score" substitute whatever figure you please, and as for the rest, we too would enter a modest plea for workaday books and over and above that the "little luxury".

A given book may be a tool for the steady standard work of instruction, an accommodation for the general reader, a piece of material, in some sense unworked, for the less predictable activities of the

research scholar, or occasionally a Museum piece notable for rarity or beauty. Probably the Friends will be interested in what can be done over and beyond the dire necessities of bibliography, and will help the Fondren Library attain the touch of the exceptional or the extra that adds distinction -- "the little more, and how much it is!" Just what form such additions will take often depends on what is being offered at the time, and nothing could be more welcome than a mobile fund ready to hand, whatever be its size, to be used by the Librarian and the Library Committee as opportunity occurs.

But it is also true that there are current and choice publications, offered in the regular trade channels, which are only too likely to prove to be out of our reach without a helping hand. The examples listed here are given only in illustration of the varied fields in which help can be rendered. To start with bibliography and book-collecting,



the Library needs a subscription to the New Colophon Annual, at \$15.00 a year, of which the publisher rightly says, "Subscribers will receive not only a beautiful book but in addition an important and entertaining one". Cutting across the fields of anthropology, art, and social history are two profusely illustrated works, Appleton's Indian Art of the Americas and Christensen's Index of American Design, \$15.00 each. On a larger scale, the magnificent edition of The Papers of Thomas Jefferson now being brought out by the Princeton University Press, which could be fully covered by a subscription of \$500, would be a princely gift, though Jefferson himself might have objected to the adjective. We may also cast a wistful and respectful glance in the direction of Anson Phelps Stokes' Church and State in the United States, \$25.00 for a massive three volume set.

And there are always the orthodox

literary firsts. Just now, for example, we have a chance, through a private offer from England, to get a sound copy of the first edition of Wordsworth's Excursion (1814) for \$14.00, or Browning's Men and Women (1855), two volumes, for \$28.00, or Browning's The Ring and the Book (1868), four volumes, for \$21.00. Not cheap, but a London dealer of repute asked over \$50.00 for Men and Women last year; and it is doubtful whether our chances to get standard firsts like these will ever be better. The devaluation of the pound works to our advantage. We have a limited option on these items; that is, they are for the present offered to us without being subject to prior sale. On the same terms we could get Horace Walpole's Essay on Modern Gardening, one of four hundred copies printed at his Strawberry Hill Press in 1785, current price \$14.00.

Alan D. McKillop

Note: Any person interested in making a gift to the Library may telephone the Librarian.

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